



South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



ROSEBUD SIOUX TRIBAL CEMETERY DEDICATION

Today was the dedication of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Sicangu Akicita Owicahe Tribal Veterans Cemetery.

The Rosebud Sioux Tribe was awarded a VA grant for \$6,948,365. The grant was the first of its kind to be awarded to a sovereign tribal nation and is under the management of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.

The cemetery is in the shape of a turtle—representing life, longevity, and fortitude. 600 crypts have already been set in place in the cemetery, with room for more. The cemetery is also designed with 32 columbariums.

George Eisenbach, Jr., Executive Assistant to the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, provided the key-note address.

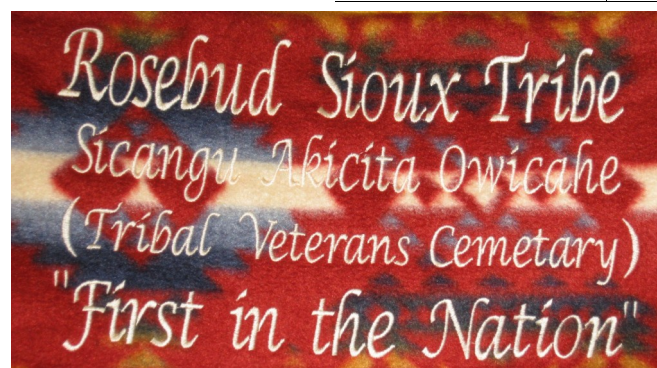
Tribal Veterans Service Officer Orlando Morrison read comments from Senator Johnson and presented Eisenbach with a gift in honor of the dedication.

Field Officer Kevin Bowen represented the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.



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DESPITE BUDGET UNCERTAINTY, SD GUARD NEEDS NEW RECRUITS

Despite Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's announcement last week of potential cuts to troop numbers across the military due to the sequester, the South Dakota National Guard is still looking for new recruits to join its ranks.

While the Defense Department has made no decision to reduce the overall size of the Army and Air National Guard's approximately 463,700 members, which includes about 4,300 South Dakota Guardsmen, South Dakota Army and Air National Guard recruiters are working to make sure they meet their current end strength goals.

"Right now we need new recruits to join," said Lt. Col. Kory Knight, commander for the SDARNG's Recruiting and Retention Command. "We have openings in about 60 positions across the state that we need South Dakota's finest to fill, both men and women."

Knight said while South Dakota has typically ranked as one of the top states in the nation when it comes to recruiting, numbers have dropped off in recent months. Knight believes the budget uncertainty is contributing to the decline in new enlistees. "With all the national-level talk of budget cuts, furloughs and possible troop reductions across the different services, I think it has created a false impression among prospective recruits and the general public that the Guard doesn't need new members," said Knight.



And it's not just the Army Guard that is in need; Air Guard recruiting is also trying to keep up with demand. According to Senior Master Sgt. Brian Voges, recruiting and retention superintendent, the Air Guard is short on filling positions. "We have 10 more projected losses for the remainder of the year, so we need approximately 22 more enlistments to reach 100 percent manning," he said. "As far as next year – we typically lose about eight members per month or 96 a year – our goal would be to at least meet that number or exceed it so we stay at or above 100 percent."

While 540 members of the Guard's full-time force have begun to endure furloughs imposed by the government sequester, unaffected are traditional Guard members who drill one weekend a month, two weeks a year.

While in recent months the active-duty Army has reported about scaling back recruitment to prevent exceeding their end strength goals, this is not true for the South Dakota Guard. It's not just the 60 Soldiers the Army Guard is hoping to gain by the year's end; Knight said the organization is shooting to recruit another 350-400 members for next year.

Despite the budget uncertainty of the nation, Knight said now is the best time for prospective recruits to take a look at joining the Guard. In an economy with a struggling job market and rising education costs, Knight says the Guard can provide the financial and educational boost students may need.

The Army National Guard funds up to 100 percent of tuition costs and fees, up to \$4,500 per person, per fiscal year. The state of South Dakota also offers its Guard members a 50 percent tuition waiver at state-supported universities and technical schools. Knight says these incentives may also be used in addition to the Montgomery G.I. Bill and Pell grants. New members may also be eligible to receive student loan repayment.

While the fiscal constraints of the nation are yet to be resolved, South Dakota recruiters continue to search for prospective recruits.

AGC OPENING DOORS FOR WOUNDED WARRIORS

Operation Opening Doors, a nonprofit arm of the Associated General Contractors South Dakota Building Chapter, is an aggressive community service project to assist wounded warriors. In the event that any active duty personnel from South Dakota is injured, the AGC of SD Building Chapter is prepared to provide them, at no cost to them, home remodeling to suit their specific disability needs and allowing them maximum independence in their own home.

The first project for Operation Opening Doors was for a serviceman from Elkton SD. This soldier's injuries resulted in amputation of part of his foot and leg. Modifications and structural improvements were made to his home including an outdoor wheelchair ramp, widening doorways, enlarging the bath, kitchen and bedroom. New cabinets, flooring and lighting were also included in the remodel.

The most recent recipient of a home makeover was Staff Sergeant Sean Johnson. SSG Johnson, an ammunitions inspector with the Aberdeen-based 452nd Ordnance Company of the Army Reserve, served his country for 23 years including three deployments: Operation Desert Storm, Operation Joint Guard, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. He most recently was bestowed the Purple Heart for injuries sustained in Iraq when a mortar exploded near him.

Gov. Dugaard attended the open house on Friday, August 16 and extended his appreciation to the local business leaders for the support of this project. Field Officer Steve Oliva attended on behalf of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.



SDDVA PARTICIPATES IN SIOUX FALLS JOB FAIR FOR VETERANS

More than 85 businesses and agencies gathered in Sioux Falls this week to host a job fair for veterans and their spouses.

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs was among the agencies there to assist veterans. George Arends, SDDVA Field Officer, and Regina Boeve, SDDVA Veterans Service Officer staffed



the Department's booth and provided veterans with an overview of the benefits and programs available to them.

This was the 7th annual veterans job fair in Sioux Falls.

JOHNSON HOSTS LEGISLATIVE FORUM IN WESTERN SOUTH DAKOTA

Earlier this week, Senator Johnson held a Veterans Roundtable in Rapid City to discuss the backlog. This setting allows leaders within the veteran network to be updated on issues at both the state and federal levels, as well as express their concerns.

Sen. Johnson reviewed his 10-point plan that is included in his Fiscal Year 2014 appropriations bill in an effort to reduce the backlog.

SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Swanson attended the roundtable on behalf of the Department of Veterans Affairs. (Photo courtesy of Rapid City Journal)



PLANNING AHEAD

Kotrba-Smith Funeral Home hosted a "planning conference" for people in Gregory and Tripp county. The conference afforded attendees to learn more about Medicaid, legal issues, death benefits, compensation programs, burial programs and funeral planning 101.



With over 90 in attendance, SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Swanson and CVSOs Roy Farabee (Gregory and Charles Mix Counties) and Terry Cousins (Todd and Tripp Counties) addressed issues relating to veterans benefits and programs.



HOMECOMING HONORS MACDONALD

Legionnaires and community leaders gathered in Hermosa Saturday, August 17, to honor State Commander Rick MacDonald. This "Homecoming" celebration affords everyone the opportunity to show their support to Commander MacDonald and the South Dakota American Legion.

Field Officer Kevin Swanson attended the "Homecoming" on behalf of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.



SOUTH DAKOTA GUARD TO UNVEIL NEW WATERTOWN READINESS CENTER

The South Dakota National Guard will host a ribbon cutting ceremony for their new Watertown Readiness Center on Saturday, Sept. 7 at 10 a.m. (CT). The \$25 million regional readiness center will enhance training and readiness for National Guard forces for years to come.

The public is encouraged to attend at the address of 1951 Hwy 20. Planned speakers for the ceremony include Lt. Gov. Matt Michels and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the SDNG.

The 80,000 square-foot building is located on 30 acres of land, about one mile from the old National Guard armory, and features classrooms, administrative space, military vehicle parking, equipment storage and an auditorium. The facility replaces Watertown's aging National Guard armory, which has been in existence since 1958. Construction on the new building began in August 2011.

The readiness center has space for about 400 Soldiers and will be home to three Army National Guard units: Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, 147th Forward Support Company and Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion.

In addition to providing better training and readiness capabilities for these units and their Soldiers, the state-of-the-art facility is also designed to meet LEED Silver criteria – making the building energy efficient and environmentally friendly. The building also includes a geothermal heat exchanger for heating and cooling, automated temperature control monitor, anti-terrorism/force protection measures, security fencing and site lighting.

The readiness center was selected for funding through the military construction process, which provides for new facilities that enhance training and readiness for units. The process of funding new armories is lengthy, and can take upwards of 15 years. Plans for the readiness center have been in the works since 1996.

Guard units from the towns of Webster, Redfield, Miller and Sisseton have relocated to the readiness center. The consolidation of these units to this more centralized location will save money, maximize resources, provide better training opportunities and develop more cohesive units that will be ready to better support state and federal missions along with disaster response.

TRIPP COUNTY VIETNAM VETERANS WELCOMED HOME

Tripp County Commissioners, Veterans Service Organizations and community leaders gathered Saturday in Winner to honor Tripp County Vietnam Era Veterans. This event provided every-

one a great opportunity to say "thank you and welcome home."

Keynote speaker for this event was SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman.

Terry Cousins (Tripp and Todd County CVSO) assisted in planning this event and continues to conduct outreach programs to network with his veterans.



ABERDEEN VETERANS STAND DOWN

Veterans Stand Down

Veterans Helping Veterans In Need

A hand up, not a hand out

Sept. 24, 2013

2:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Aberdeen Civic Center

203 S. Washington

**Welcome all Veterans to this
gathering of county, state, and
federal Veterans services**

**On-the-spot help including meal, clothing,
community housing referral, social
services, medical treatment, readjustment
counseling, women Veterans health care,
VA benefit information and much more.
For info, call 605-229-3500 or 605-940-9852.**

**This is in conjunction with Aberdeen's
2nd Annual Project Connect.
Families are welcome!**

Upcoming Events

Aug. 24—Walk for the Fallen—Sioux Falls
 Aug. 24-25—Freedom Bird 2013—W. H. Lyon Fairgrounds—Sioux Falls 10:00 am—5:00 pm
 Aug. 26-28—VSO Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
 Aug. 29—Salute to Veterans and Military Personnel Day at the SD State Fair
 Aug. 31—DAV/727th Poker Run—Brookings Armory—11:00 am
 Sept. 7—SDNG Watertown Readiness Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony—10:00 am
 Sept. 11—Stand Down—Wagner National Guard Armory—11:00 am
 Sept. 13—Stand Down—Watertown—Salvation Army (621 4th St SE) - 11:00 am
 Sept. 13-14—Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Retreat—Aberdeen
 Sept. 20—Stand Down—Sioux Falls—VFW Post 628 (3601 S. Minnesota Ave.) 8:00 am—3:00 pm
 Sept. 21—Black Hills Veterans March—Deadwood
 Sept. 24—Stand Down—Aberdeen
 Sept. 28-29—American Legion Golf Tournament—Webster
 Sept. 30—Stand Down—Sioux Falls
 Oct. 1—Black Hills National Cemetery Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
 Dec. 15—Wreaths Across America Ceremony—Black Hills National Cemetery—10:00 am

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